5: Crowder J-5 (1955-1961) 1962
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668 personality, its uniqueness as Senghor saw it, is best understood from this quotation:

> That is to say that the Negro, traditionally, is not devoid of reason, as people would have me say. But his reason is not discursive, it is synthetic; it is not antagonistic but sympathetic. It has a different mode of perception. Negro reasoning does not detract from the things it contemplates, it does not mould them into two rigid schemes, thereby ignoring their very essence; it flows through the veins of things to arrive at the living heart of reality. The reasoning of the white man is analytical by utilisation, that of the Negro intuitive by participation.

Whether all the advocates of the African personality held so abstruse and philosophical a concept of its character is doubtful. But as the young poet Lamine Diakhite, a close disciple of Senghor, has written: 'Let us admit it, it is thanks to Senghor and Césaire that my generation became aware of itself, that it embarked upon the path of asserting its personality.'

[571] This movement, started in the late forties, was to touch mainly the intellectuals, those who had been most assimilated by the French. The poorer classes had of course not been so effectively alienated from their past. These intellectuals were during the next years to question everything in the light of this newly discovered or rediscovered African personality. Some advocated the shutting of the door against Europe and some of Cheikh Anta Diop's writings have elements of counter-racism. Whilst Europeans have been asserting their superiority over Africans for so long, he counters by asserting the Negro superiority over Europeans. Fortunately this negative attitude did not survive to any important degree.

There was also a healthy questioning of the values of European or Western culture, though this often went to the extremes of outright rejection. David Diop, the young [539] Senegalese poet who died recently in an air crash, accuses the white man's civilisation of hypocrisy:

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In the country where the houses touch the sky
but where the heart is not touched
In the country where the hand is placed on the Bible
but where the Bible remains closed.*

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The forum for this great re-examination of the African past was to be *Présence Africaine*, a bi-monthly review of Negro African culture, founded by a Senegalese called Alioune Diop in 1947 and open 'to all contributors of good-will (white, yellow or black), who might be able to help define African originality and to hasten its introduction into the modern world'. Although the review was Pan-Negro in outlook, its original inspiration came from a small group of Senegalese intellectuals in association with West Indians like Césaire and Haitians like Price-Mars. There was of course nothing parochial about this. It was only that the Senegalese were the first, for the reasons outlined above, to feel really strongly about the reassertion of African culture. And when in 1956 *Présence Africaine's* efforts culminated in the first Congress of Negro Writers and Artists, the Senegalese were to play a dominant role. In his opening speech to the conference Alioune Diop, the secretary and backbone of the organisation, made a moving protest against the myth of a people without culture, a protest that earned the support of all delegates. But his attacks on assimilation can have had relatively little meaning for delegates from the English-speaking territories; whilst some of the American Negro delegates like Richard Wright felt that as far as they were concerned it was impossible to return to a past from which they had been physically and culturally removed for over three centuries. Replying to a brilliant discourse by Senghor on 'The Laws of the Negro African Culture', he asked: 'I wonder where do I, an American Negro, conditioned by the harsh industrial, abstract force of the Western world that has used stern, political prejudices

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* Translated by Ulli Beier.